

Wisconsin Towns Association

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To: Assembly Committee on Transportation

From: Richard J. Stadelman, Executive Director

Re: AB 305 relating to overweight permits for vehicles carrying sealed containers or vehicles in international trade

AB 306 relating to vehicles carrying certain agricultural products

Date: October 10, 2011

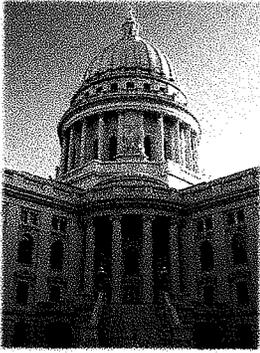
Wisconsin Towns Association does not oppose AB 305 relating to overweight permits for vehicles carrying sealed containers or vehicles in international trade, nor AB 306 relating to certain vehicles carrying certain agricultural products. This memo is intended to provide information as to the effect on local highways including town and village highways.

Both of these bills would authorize increased maximum weights on the vehicles described in the bills to a maximum of 90,000 pounds for those vehicles containing an extra axle or axles. The Wisconsin Truck Size and Weight Study (completed in June, 2009) established that the impact on highway surfaces by vehicles with an additional axle or axles carrying 90,000 pounds is no greater than currently permitted vehicles with lesser axles carrying 80,000 pounds. Therefore AB 305 and AB 306 should not have an increased impact, in principle on highway surfaces than currently permitted vehicles. We understand the desire to have the Wisconsin trucking industry and the industries they serve to be as competitive as possible with neighboring states.

AB 305 and AB 306 do not take away any authority of local jurisdictions to impose weight limits on their local highways and bridges. It is very important that local jurisdictions retain this authority, in particular under Sec. 349.16 of Wis. Statutes to impose seasonal and special weight limits on local highways when needed in the opinion of the local highway authorities.

In addition, while AB 305 and AB 306 is intended to permit increased weights on state highways, it needs to be recognized that these types of vehicles may need to make picks and final delivery on local highways, off the state system. Of concern is that many local bridges on town, village, city and county highways are not in condition to carry the increased weight of 90,000 by a single vehicle. We recognize that neither AB 305 nor AB 306 are intended to permit these overweight vehicles on local bridges, nor take away local authority to post local bridges with lesser weight limits. Increasing weight limits on state highways may however have the potential for some of these vehicles crossing local bridges.

For all the reasons stated above, Wisconsin Towns Association does not oppose AB 305 nor AB 306, but wants to note that there may be unintended impacts on local bridges. We hope that the state legislature remembers these potential impacts in future funding decisions for local highways and bridges.



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Assembly Transportation Committee October 11, 2011

Testimony of Amy Winters, Contract lobbyist for Gold'n Plump Poultry on AB 306, pertaining annual or consecutive month permits for certain overweight vehicles or vehicle combinations transporting agricultural products.

Chairman Petrowski, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on Assembly Bill 306. My Client, Gold'n Plump Poultry is very supportive of this bill and urges your support and prompt passage.

Gold'n Plump is the largest broiler producer in the upper Midwest with operations in Minnesota and Wisconsin; they compete by fractions of pennies for market share against much larger US broiler companies such as Tyson and Perdue.

The increased weight limits that would be allowed under Assembly Bill 306 would be a significant help to them in continuing to compete in their industry. With fuel, utility and feed costs more than doubling the last few years, Gold'n Plump has needed to continually find ways to increase efficiency to stay viable.

In Wisconsin, Gold'n Plump has 500 employees and partners/contracts with 154 Wisconsin farm families, guaranteeing them a stable income and helping to provide a strong local economy. They also just completed a 5 year, 53 million dollar state of the art expansion that has resulted in increased production from 740,000 birds per week to 960,000 birds per week. This has helped their bottom line, but they are still not where they expected to be when they started the expansion and their goal of adding additional employees.

Allowing more freight to be transported in each load will allow Gold'n plump to take significantly fewer trips saving on fuel and truck maintenance. Gold'n Plump expects that they will save between \$150,000 to \$200,000 annually in costs to haul live birds and feed between their facilities and their grower's barns which are scattered in a 60 miles radius of Arcadia. They will be configuring their trucks with seven axles to meet the federal bridge formula with their shorter trucks that are needed to navigate tight turning radiuses on many of their growers' farms.

Studies in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa all confirm that a 90,000 lbs six axle weight configuration has a lower load equivalency factor and causes less road damage than the current 80,000 lbs on 5 axle configuration. The 90,000 on six also does not increase stress on bridges. This bill makes sound economic sense for Wisconsin's agriculture industry as well as for the state's transportation infrastructure.

Thank you Chairman Petrowski for introducing this important measure and showing companies like Gold'n Plump that Wisconsin is in fact open for business.